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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001231

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [KISL](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: BOUNTY FOR ROGUE MNLF COMMANDER; NO OIC MEDIATION

REF: A. MANILA 1206
[1](#)B. MANILA 1187

Classified By: Pol/C Scott Bellard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Armed Forces of the Philippines has offered a 1-million peso reward for the capture of rogue Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Commander Habier Malik. Sporadic fighting continues between Malik's followers and government security forces on Jolo. A total of seven men, including six government road project workers, have been kidnapped in two separate incidents by suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf Group. All Joint Special Operations Task Force personnel remain safe. Despite appeals for a cease-fire, Philippine military forces plan to continue their operation, with the full support of Malacanang, until bringing Malik to justice. The Philippine government has declined the OIC's assistance. There are over 8,000 displaced families on Jolo, most of whom have not sought shelter at evacuation centers. End Summary.

Reward for Malik

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has now offered a 1-million peso reward for the capture of rogue Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Commander Habier Malik, responsible for the recent attacks and fighting on Jolo Island (reftels). Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process Secretary Jesus Dureza described Malik as a "common criminal"

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and called upon the MNLF leadership for assistance in bringing him to justice.

[1](#)3. (C) Detained MNLF Chairman and Sulu Gubernatorial candidate Nur Misuari has denied ordering the April 13-14 mortar attacks by Malik's followers, according to Philippine National Police Chief Superintendent Leo Santiago. Other MNLF leaders, including members of the Council of 15, have similarly distanced themselves from Malik.

ASG Still Active

[1](#)4. (C) Sporadic fighting continues between government security forces and Malik's followers on Jolo, according to the U.S. Joint Special Operations Force - Philippines (JOSTF-P). Suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf Group under Alabadar Parad have apparently abducted seven Filipinos in two separate incidents recently. Six were workers for a government road project, traveling by truck from Indanan to

Parang. The seventh victim was a dried-fish factory worker.

15. (C) There are unconfirmed reports from military sources in Jolo that the AFP in a military operation on April 17 killed the ASG's Tahil Sali and four other ASG members after they were part of an attack on a company of the AFP's 33rd Infantry Brigade in Parang.

Pursuit of Malik To Continue; thanks, but no to OIC

16. (C) Sultan Muhammad Abdulla Fuad Kiram, whom Habier Malik and other MNLF members formally recognized as the "legitimate" Sultan of Sulu and North Borneo during a March 18 meeting at Malik's camp in Bitanag, has now appealed for an end to the fighting, along with former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Governor Parouk Hussin (also the MNLF's external relations chief) and Senator Aquilino Pimental, Jr. Philippine military authorities have nonetheless vowed to continue operations against Malik and his followers, with the full support of Malacanang.

17. (C) In response to the Organization of Islamic Conference's call for a cease-fire under the terms of the 1996 peace accord with the MNLF, Foreign Secretary Alberto G. Romulo on April 17 formally expressed the Philippine government's appreciation for the OIC's commitment to the peace process in the southern Philippines and the implementation of the 1996 peace accord, reiterated that the AFP was not engaged in military operations against the MNLF itself but had been attacked by MNLF elements under Malik as the AFP pursued ASG elements in Sulu, and therefore declined an OIC proposal for "the constitution of a small military monitoring mission to observe the suspension of military

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operations."

Displaced persons

18. (U) According to an April 18 report from the National Disaster Coordinating Council under the Department of National Defense, the fighting on Jolo has now displaced more than 8,400 families, of whom only about 2,000 are receiving assistance in evacuation centers in Indanan and Luuk. The Philippine National Red Cross and local authorities continue to provide limited assistance, but have claimed that most of the displaced persons have sought help from friends and relatives instead. Zampenbasulta, an NGO umbrella organization aligned with the Mindanao Emergency Response Network through Ateneo de Zamboanga University's Peace Institute, is also active in providing assistance.

19. (U) The NDCC has also reported that more than 7,000 people have been displaced from Pagalugan, Maguindanao as a result of a family feud; less than 2,000 are in evacuation centers in North Cotabato. Yet another 300 families have separately been displaced due to election campaign-related violence in Pagalungan. Another 500 families were displaced in Datu Ampatuan and Rajah Buayan, Maguindanao after fighting between an MNLF command and the MILF's 105th base command beginning on April 13 due to a "personal grudge."

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